

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A computerized method of representing at least one characteristic of a design element on a visual design surface, the method comprising:

(a) using shapes to visually represent design elements on a visual design surface, wherein the design elements are entities of a process or system being designed by a user, and the design elements include a first design element and a second design element;

(b) defining characteristics for the design elements such that each of the design elements is associated with at least one of the characteristics, the defined characteristics including first and second characteristics which are mutually exclusive, wherein the determination of the characteristic associated with each design element is independent of the determination of the characteristics associated with the other design elements, and wherein the first design element is associated with the first characteristic and the second design element is associated with the second characteristic;

(c) associating the characteristics with auras, respectively, each of the auras being a visually perceptible element on the visual design surface that is distinguishable from the other auras, wherein different ones of the characteristics are associated with different auras;

(d) displaying the shape for each design element on the visual design surface with the aura associated with the characteristic associated with that design element, wherein the shapes of the first and second design elements are displayed with different auras;

(e) automatically moving the shapes of design elements associated with the first characteristic into a first ~~affinity~~-region and automatically moving the shapes of design elements associated with the second characteristic into a second ~~affinity~~-region, such that the shapes moved into the first ~~affinity~~-region are located in proximity to each other on the visual design surface while the shapes moved to the second ~~affinity~~-region are located in proximity to each other on the visual design surface, and the shape of the first design element is located in the first ~~affinity~~-region while the second design element is located in the second ~~affinity~~-region;

(f) automatically merging the individual auras of the shapes of design elements within the first region with one another to produce a first affinity region, and automatically

merging the individual auras of the shapes of design elements within the second region with one another to produce a second affinity region; and

(g) ~~changing~~ the second design element from being associated with the second characteristic to being associated with the first characteristic when the shape of the second design element ~~being-is~~ dragged from the second affinity region and hovered over the first affinity region by a user.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the aura comprises a color coded area surrounding the shape.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the aura comprises a color coded area adjacent to at least a portion of the shape.

4-6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) A computerized method of representing at least one characteristic of a design element on a visual design surface, the method comprising:

(a) using shapes to visually represent design elements on a visual design surface, wherein the design elements are entities of a process or system being designed by a user, and the design elements include a first design element and a second design element;

(b) defining characteristics for the design elements such that each of the design elements is associated with one of the characteristics, wherein the characteristic associated with the first design element is different than the characteristic associated with the second design element;

(c) associating the characteristics with auras, respectively, each of the auras being a visually perceptible element on the visual design surface that is distinguishable from the other auras, wherein different ones of the characteristics are associated with different auras;

(d) displaying the shape for each design element on the visual design surface with the aura associated with the characteristic associated with that design element, wherein the shapes of the first and second design elements are displayed with different auras; and

(e) automatically moving the shapes of design elements sharing a particular one of the characteristics into ~~an affinity~~ a region for the particular characteristic, such that the moved shapes are located in proximity to each other on the visual design surface;

(f) automatically merging the individual auras of the shapes of design elements within the region with one another to produce an affinity region; and

(g) ~~providing a label for at least one~~ the affinity region in a manner that allows a user to change the label in order to change the design elements contained in the affinity region from design elements associated with the particular characteristic to design elements associated with another characteristic.

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristics defined in (b) include a use for the design element.

9. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristics defined in (b) include an identification of a namespace.

10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristics defined in (b) include an identification of an application layer.

11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the characteristics defined in (b) include an identification of an importance level.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein (d) further includes:  
associating a particular design element with different ones of the characteristics which are not mutually exclusive; and

displaying the shape for the particular design element on the visual design surface with the auras associated with the different characteristics, respectively.

13-18 (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium containing computer-executable instructions for performing the steps comprising:

(a) displaying on a visual design surface multiple shapes corresponding to design elements, respectively, the multiple design elements including first and second design elements; and

(b) defining characteristics for the design elements such that each of the design elements is associated with at least one of the characteristics, the defined characteristics including first and second characteristics which are mutually exclusive, wherein the first design element is associated with the first characteristic and the second design element is associated with the second characteristic;

(c) defining auras for the characteristics, respectively, such that different characteristics have different auras, each of the auras being a visually perceptible element on the visual display surface that is distinguishable from the other auras;

(d) displaying on the visual design surface each of the design element shapes in proximity with the aura generated for the characteristic associated with the design element;

(e) automatically moving the shapes of design elements associated with the first characteristic into a first ~~affinity~~-region and automatically moving the shapes of design elements associated with the second characteristic into a second ~~affinity~~-region, such that the shapes moved into the first ~~affinity~~-region are located in proximity to each other on the visual design surface while the shapes associated with the second ~~affinity~~-region are located in proximity to each other on the visual design surface, and the shape of the first design element is located in the first ~~affinity~~-region while the shape of the second design element is located in the second ~~infinity~~ region;

(f) automatically merging the individual auras of the shapes of design elements within the first region with one another to produce a first affinity region, and automatically merging the individual auras of the shapes of design elements within the second region with one another to produce a second affinity region; and

(g) ~~f~~ changing the second design element from being associated with the second characteristic to being associated with the first characteristic when the shape of the second design element ~~being~~ is dragged from the second affinity region and hovered over the first affinity region by a user,

wherein (d) visually indicates that the first and second design elements have different characteristics, and

wherein the design elements are entities of a process or system being designed by a user.

20. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein (d) comprises displaying the aura around the design element shape.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein each of the characteristics defined in (b) comprises one of the following: a particular namespace for the corresponding design element, a particular importance level for the corresponding design element, a particular security requirement for the corresponding design element, and a particular intended use within the process or system for the corresponding design element.

23. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein in step (b) the determination of the characteristic associated with each design element is independent of the determination of the characteristics associated with the other design elements.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the design elements comprise at least one of the following: business processes, flowchart steps, hosting platforms, and hardware components.

25. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein the design elements comprise at least one of the following: business processes, flowchart steps, hosting platforms, and hardware components.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the design elements comprise business processes or flowchart steps corresponding to a process being designed by the user.

27. (Previously Presented) The computer-readable medium of claim 19, wherein the design elements comprise either business processes or flowchart steps corresponding to a process being designed by the user.